

That Blue Blue Sea

by liveonpurpose

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Summary: At one high school in Australia there are several magical creatures of the sea. They meet in secret, keeping their identities secret. Can they defend Mako Island when a band of evil creatures try to take it over? This is a create your own character story.

## 1. Chapter 1

Hey everyone! I've seen a couple of these stories get started and I would like to create one of my own! I love writing but I sometimes have a hard time coming up with interesting plots and characters. SO here is what I'd like to do.

I need 4 main characters: 2 boys, 2 girls. They can either be new creations or characters from H2o.

I also need at least 3 supporting characters and one villain. Again, they can be original or existing characters.

Feel free to be as detailed as you'd like  
:)

Name:

Age:

Mermaid/Merman?

Siblings?

Power?

Personality?

Any other details?

If your character was a celebrity which celebrity would he/she be?

If you have any particular plot ideas or back stories please feel free to suggest them. I will be incorporating classic H2o characters with the new ones you guys come up with. I will be consulting you guys if I have any questions about the characters to make sure I write them the way you picture them, and I will give you full credit for your creations. I just want to come up with the story.

Please either PM me, or leave your character in the reviews! I'm so excited to get started!

I apologize for not being able to use everyone's ideas, thank you guys for taking the time and the interest! I can't wait to get started!

## 2. The meetings

Thanks sooooo much to everyone who sent in characters. I was going to try to pick my favorites, but I loved each one of them! I may change a few details about each one, but I loved the thought everyone put into their creations. This story will have a lot of characters in it, but I hope it doesn't get too overwhelming!

Credits:

\*\*Linda Smith- Created by Calyn  
>Drew Jonston- Created by shootingstarsandjaybirds<br>Elyse Leeler- Created by booklover707  
>Natalie West and Jason Lore- Created by Catlover10808<br>Ryanna Joan Chadwick (RJ)- Created by Tabyylynn  
>Nathaniel Alahan- Created by Flaming Man of Fire<br>Angel Luna Evans- Created by XxAnGeLwInGsXx11  
>Tessa Gilbert- Created by CharmedMillieE<strong>

Not all characters appear in the first chapter, but don't worry. They're coming! Thanks again! On with the story!

\* \* \*

><p>"Are you coming to the meeting today?" Elyse Leeler whispered to her friend Cleo Sertori.<p>

"Do I have a choice?" Cleo rolled her eyes sarcastically.

"I'll see you there." Elyse said with a subtle wink as she hurried through the hall of the high school she and all her friends attended. Her long, curly, brown hair swished back and forth against her back in it's usual ponytail as she walked. She quickly spotted the familiar face she was looking for. "Are you coming to the-" She began.

"Yes, yes, I'll see you there." Jason Lore said absently. His deep blue eyes were following Natalie West as she walked down the hall and stopped at her locker. His pulse quickened as he admired her. He exhaled, wishing he had the courage to walk up to her and confess how utterly in love with her he was. He finally managed to focus his eyes back on Elyse. "It's at 3, right?"

"Right." Elyse said innocently before turning to walk away. She'd

watched Jason moon over Natalie for almost a year now, ever since she had transferred to their school. She'd told Jason to go for it, but he was just too nervous.

Elyse felt her own pulse quicken as she zeroed in on her next target, but it didn't quicken in a good way. She walked stiffly up to Nathaniel Alahan. "Um, today's meeting is at three." She said under her breath before walking on, not waiting for his reply. He scared her. Just standing beside him made her nervous.

"Hey!" Rikki Chadwick caught Elyse's elbow as she walked past. "I've been looking for you all over. Did you spread the word?"

"Meeting today, three o'clock." Elyse bobbed her head. "I think I've told everyone."

"See you there!" Rikki sounded more chipper than usual. She really loved these meetings.

It had all started about three months ago. Bella had been the first to receive a letter. It had come in the mail in a plain white envelope with no return address.

'Meeting Friday at 3:30pm by invitation only. Room 309 of the high school. No uninvited guests.' Was all it said. Bella had been all ready to crumple the note and toss it in the trash, but a watermarked picture at the bottom of the page gave her pause. There, so faint she could barely see it, was the image of a mermaid swimming into the moon pool at Mako Island. Bella had looked around, alarmed that someone knew her secret, but no one was standing nearby. Rikki, Emma, Elyse and Cleo had received identical letters the next day. They had discussed what to do, and in the end they had just decided to go to the meeting. They knew that they would rather have answers than questions.

They had walked up to the door warily, keeping their eyes peeled for any kind of trap. Lewis, Zane, and Will had been on call. They were more than ready to jump into action at the first sign of trouble.

Inside, the classroom looked just like it always did. There were rows of seats in front of a chalkboard. The room was empty except for a boy who sat in the second row. The girls had recognized him from school. His name was Jason and they didn't know him well. They'd only had a few classes with him over the years.

He stood awkwardly. "Hey."

The girls let their guard down slightly as they stepped inside. "Hey, Jason, right?" Cleo said carefully.

Jason nodded. He held up a white piece of paper. "Did you guys get one too?"

The girls nodded. "Wait a second." Rikki's brow furrowed as she looked at Jason's letter. "Let me look at that." She held the letter up to the light and examined it. "His is different." She murmured to Bella. "Look, the watermark at the bottom is of a merman, not a mermaid."

It was hard to make out, but sure enough, the picture at the bottom was clearly of a male, not a female. The girls looked at Jason with wide eyes.

"Jason..." Emma said slowly. "Are you a... merman?"

Jason's eyes flew open wide. "What?" He stammered unconvincingly. "Don't be silly, of course not."

The four girls exchanged looks with one another. "Ok." Rikki nodded casually. "It was just an innocent question."

The door swung open before anyone could say anything else. A small girl stepped quietly inside. "Is this this room 309?" She asked meekly, her voice barely louder than a whisper.

"It is." Elyse said, still keeping an eye on Jason, who had broken out into a nervous sweat.

The girl bobbed her head up and down and silently took a seat in the front row. She kept her head down, not bothering to brush her mousy brown hair out of her eyes.

The rest of the group watched as the girl sat down, waiting for her to look up so that they could speak to her. She didn't.

"Did you get one of these too?" Rikki stepped over to her, holding up her letter.

The girl nodded silently, avoiding Rikki's eyes. She jumped slightly as the door swung open once again.

Angel Evans and RJ Chadwick were in the middle of a conversation as they stepped into the room. They hushed as they looked around at all of the curious eyes staring at them.

"Um, hey everyone." Angel said bluntly. She marched over to a seat towards the back of the room and plopped down. "So what is this meeting for anyway?" Angel twirled her long, unnaturally blonde hair around her fingers as she popped her gum.

"You don't know either?" Cleo raised her eyebrows.

"Nah." RJ sat beside her friend. "We just got these in the mail. We figured we'd see what was up." She held up two white envelopes.

"Well, it's three on the dot." Emma checked her watch. "I guess we'll find out soon."

As soon as the words left her mouth the door opened. A tall man stepped through. The group recognized him as one of the senior class advisers at the school. "Hello everyone." He said with an easy smile. "My name is Mr. Fieldman, but you may call me Bill. Please take a seat."

The group did as he asked. Bill stood in the front of the room, looking at each of them in turn. "Ah, it looks like almost all of us are here." He paced as he spoke. "Rikki Chadwick, Elyse Leeler, Cleo Sertori, Emma Gilbert, and Bella Hartly." He stopped next to Bella's

desk. "I assume the five of you came together." He said.

The five girls nodded a little nervously. "What are we here for?" Rikki finally asked.

"In time." Bill said before he walked on. He stopped at the next desk. "Jason Lore, I'm glad you made it." Bill patted him on the back. "Don't be intimidated, you aren't the only boy in the group."

Jason shrugged his shoulders anxiously. He kept shooting looks at the girls. They hadn't pushed any further on the merman issue, but he knew they hadn't forgotten it.

"Linda Smith." Bill paused at the shy girl's desk.

Linda gave a small nod, but didn't speak.

"Don't worry." Bill said comfortingly. "The people here are friends. You needn't be shy."

Linda didn't seem convinced. She looked around the room with wide, curious eyes.

"And here we have RJ Chadwick and Angel Luna Evans." Bill said to the last two girls. "You two are closer than most siblings. I'm glad to meet you."

Bill walked back to the front of the room and turned around. "I'm sure you're all wondering why I've assembled you here today." He addressed the group. "We're still a couple members light, but I don't want to wait to get started." He stood still a few moments, letting the tension build before he continued. "You all have a secret." He spoke. "One that you don't tell anyone else."

Everyone in the room exchanged slightly panicked looks with each other. Jason started to stand. He just wanted to get out of there. The girls followed suit, ready to bail. They didn't know what this Bill guy was up to, but they weren't about to wait around to find out. Bill put both hands out and spoke clearly but gently.

"Now now, please, no one panic." He said calmly. "I'm not here to cause trouble. I'm here to help you." He waited for everyone to sit back down, but the only ones who did were RJ and Angel. "I know what you all are." Bill said in a loud voice before lowering his tone. "I know you're all mermaids." He looked to the girls. "And I know you're a merman." His eyes fell on Jason.

A stunned silence filled the room. All eyes were 100% focused on Bill. No one moved a muscle for several seconds. It was Elyse who pulled herself together first. She looked around the room at all of her classmates before turning to Bill.

"You are mistaken." She bluffed, her voice only shaking slightly.

"No I'm not." Bill took a seat behind the desk. "I've known all along. Some of you for longer than others, but that's just because some of you have been mers for longer than others. Elyse, you've been a mermaid for five years. You turned at the moon pool on Mako island.

Am I right?"

A ripple went through the room as people reacted. "Yes, several of you were changed out at Mako island." Bill said conversationally. "Cleo, Rikki, and Emma. You changed there about 2 and a half years ago together. RJ and Angel just changed a couple months ago out there. And Jason changed there almost 10 years ago."

Jason swallowed self consciously as his biggest secret was spoken aloud to a room full of people he barely knew. Everyone seemed to have the same looks on their faces.

Bill continued. "Linda, you were changed three years ago at a moon pool on the other side of Australia while on vacation with your parents. And Bella, changed in Ireland six hears ago. Did I miss anyone?"

"How do you know so much about us?" Jason spoke up.

"And why did you get us all together like this?" Angel called out.

"I've been studying all kinds of supernatural creatures my whole life." Bill explained. "I am especially curious about water creatures."

"Water creatures?" RJ raised her eyebrows.

"Mermaids. Mermen." Bill listed. "You two aren't the only supernatural creatures in the ocean."

"What else is there?" Cleo spoke up curiously.

"A great deal." Bill said. He looked to the door. "I had hoped we'd have a few others here today, but it seems like they won't be making it. But you are all merpeople." He gestured to the room.

"Ok." Elyse said practically. "But why get us all together like this?"

"Things are about to change here." Bill said bluntly. "All of you have ended up in the same town, seemingly by accident. It was no accident, you've been drawn here together. There is more supernatural activity in this town than you know, and there will be more on it's way before too long."

"Wait, what does that mean?" Angel crossed her arms over her chest.

"You need to protect Mako." Bill said firmly. "A group of creatures has found out about it and they want it for themselves. They are not as powerful as you all, but only if you work together. You need to get to know each other. Protect each other. Keep an eye out."

"And why would you tell us this?" RJ narrowed her eyes. "What's in it for you?"

"There would be problems for all of us if Mako is taken over, not just mers." Bill explained. "I don't know when they will get here, but I know that they aren't much of a match for the group of

you."

"And who are \_they?"\_ Bella asked.

"I'll tell you more as soon as I know it." Bill had said cryptically. He looked up in surprise as the door opened slowly. A familiar face poked in.

"Hey guys, sorry I'm late." Natalie West stepped in the room, followed reluctantly by Nathaniel Alahan. "We were in our chemistry final and we couldn't leave the room until the last test was handed in." She stopped walking and looked around the room.

Jason sat up a little straighter as his gaze at Natalie. He had had a crush on her for years now. He couldn't believe she was there. Did that mean she was a... mermaid? Jason felt giddy with nerves as the beautiful golden-haired girl took a seat next to him.

Nathaniel glared at the room. He didn't step in any further.

"I'm glad you're here, Natalie." Bill said. Natalie looked surprised to hear him say her name, but she didn't ask anything yet. "And Nathaniel." Bill walked over to him and put one hand on his shoulder. "I'm so glad to have you here."

"Don't touch me." Nathaniel shook his shoulder away from Bill. "What are we here for anyway?"

Bill explained everything as quickly as he could. The group of kids had all listened carefully to each word.

That had been three months ago. They had had several meetings since that day. Nowadays it was usually Elyse who got the letter in the mail. She then spread the word to the rest of the group. For the most part, they had all ended up friends though some were closer than others. Even Linda had begun to open up a bit. She was still painfully shy though. The one member of their odd group who couldn't seem to fit in was Nathaniel. When Bill had said that there were other kinds of water creatures he had been right. Nathaniel was not a merman.

They had seen him transform only once, and that was enough. It was on the day that Bill suggested they all go out on the water together. Bill rented a huge boat and sailed them out to a secluded bit of ocean far from the shore. They'd jumped into the water one at a time, showing off how fast they could swim and what they were capable of. Each of them had different talents and they were having a great time being able to share them with one another.

And then there was Nathaniel. He hadn't wanted to go into the water like the others, but was pressured into it. He grimly stepped off the edge of the boat and let himself fall into the waves.

It was only a few seconds before he resurfaced. His skin had changed from tan to a steel gray color. His body still looked human in most ways, but the differences were terrifying. His teeth had elongated slightly and were sharp as knives. His eyes glowed a deep blood red color, and his hair stood up on end. He held his arms out and actually rose out of the water to land silently on the deck of the boat. He breathed heavily as he looked at everyone. They could feel

heat emanating from him, though they stood several feet away.

The rest of the group backed away from him as he stood in front of him. He stood there glaring at all of the for a few seconds before raising his arm. As he waved one hand in the air in front of him, the water clinging to his skin instantly vanished. He once more became the sullen teen they had met a few weeks ago. "Happy?" Was all he had said before he stomped moodily to the other end of the boat, away from everyone else.

The rest of the group had tried to befriend him, but it didn't seem to be happening. He had turned down every attempt at friendship they'd offered him, and they'd basically given up. He was cold, unfriendly, and utterly disconnected. He scared the rest of the gang. There was something about him that made all of them uncomfortable. He came to all of the meetings, but usually left early and angry.

Other than Nathaniel, everyone else settled into an odd sort of friendship. During the regular school day they didn't interact much. They still hung out with their usual friends. But once a week they all came together to talk about things no one else knew about. It helped, kind of like having a support group. Not to mention the fact that they could cover for each other easily. More than once, one member of the group had helped another out of a tight spot where water was involved. They liked having a place to come to where they didn't have to hide. And that's how it had all started.

"See you today at three!" Elyse called to RJ as she walked past.

It was fun. They felt united. They had a secret that they kept from everyone else. But they had a place to go where none of that mattered. At least for now.

### 3. The news

Hey All, MANY apologies for the completely slow update. To say things have been crazy up here in Pennsylvania would be a massive understatement. I'm hoping to get an update done for ALL of my stories by the end of this weekend. If any of you are still reading, I appreciate your patience and I've missed chatting with all of you! I hope this chapter is alright. I have to be honest, I finished writing the majority of it over a month ago, and when I sat back down to finish it up I was a little bit lost. SO if any of this is confusing please help me make it better. Just trying to get back into the swing of writing again. Anywho, I hope you enjoy, thanks to all who take the time to read! :) ~S.

\* \* \*

><p>Three o'clock came quickly, and found the seven teens in their usual spots in the classroom. The majority of the group sat in the first two rows. Bella, Cleo, Rikki, Elyse, RJ, and Angel sat in the front group of seats. Linda sat in the same row, slightly off to the side. Natalie was seated behind Rikki. She was leaned forward, chattering in Rikki's ear about some homework assignment they were dreading. Jason was sitting hopefully beside Natalie, though she didn't seem to notice him there. And, as always, Nathaniel was seated by himself in the third row.<p>



"Hello gang." Bill bustled into the room with an arm full of thick notebooks. He dropped the heavy stack onto the desk at the front of the room. "I have news."

The room hushed as heads turned to face the front of the room.

"Yes?" RJ pushed.

"Ok." Bill took a deep breath and faced the group. "As I'm sure each of you know, tomorrow is a full moon."

"No offense Bill," Elyse laughed. "But \_duh.\_"

"I know, I know." Bill held his hands out diplomatically. "I'm very much aware that everyone in this room knows exactly which day of the month the full moon falls on. But this one is slightly different."

The heads in the room all turned to face him attentively.

"I know that all of you have your own processes for handling the moon." Bill continued. "You've spent the last couple together, right?"

A giggle rippled through the room. Jason blushed crimson as he sank down into his chair. For the last few full moons the gang had spent the night together holed up in Will's boat shed. Well, all of them except Linda and Nathaniel. They preferred to spend their moonlit nights alone.

For the last two full moons everyone had made it through the night unscathed. Everyone... except Jason. He'd caught a glimpse of the moon last month and had thoroughly embarrassed himself in front of everyone. He had been late on his way to the boat shed, saw the moon as it rose, and had taken off to Mako Island. Lewis and Zane had had to drag him back, dodging flailing arms. The girls had had a blast keeping him inside the shed all night, and they had the incriminating photos to remind him of it.

"All right, settle." Bill said calmly, hiding a grin. "This full moon is different from any other one you've ever experienced." Bill unraveled a long map of the solar system and tacked it up over the black board at the front of the room. "The moon is not the only planet that affects you guys." He said.

"Really?" Rikki sat up. "And what does that mean?"

"Usually, not too much." Bill sat on the corner of his desk. "When a particular planet is near the earth you may feel more emotional than usual, or slightly more powerful, but the planets aren't really close enough to do much. But, on this particular full moon, mars is closest to the earth, and at the point it crosses over Australia it is in perfect alignment with the moon."

Jason raised his eyebrows. "And that means what, exactly?"

"It hasn't happened in sixty years." Bill said calmly. "But we do have plenty of documentation of what happened." He paused, letting the tension build.

"Tell us!" Cleo pleaded. "We're dying here."

"It would be best if you split into threes, or pairs, for this full moon." Bill spoke. "The alignment of mars with the moon combined with the closeness of the planet will magnify the power of the full moon more than you can imagine."

"So..." Linda spoke up meekly. "Doesn't that mean that we should stay together? To keep each other safe?" She looked around the room quickly for support.

She got it. Almost everyone in the room nodded.

"I have to agree." Bella spoke up. "If this moon is so powerful, shouldn't we stay together? To look out for one another?"

"No." Bill said simply. "This moon will be so intensely powerful that your powers will actually magnify each others. Kind of like the way light bounces off of a mirror, it lights the whole room. With the group of you staying together, all it would take is for one of you to go moonstruck and the amount of power in the room would be enormous. It would be hard to contain it all in one simple boat boat shed. If you separate into pairs you can keep a watch out for your partner, but if one of you goes moonstruck it will be at a much lower level than if you were all together."

"So... we do what exactly?" Cleo leaned back in her chair.

"I suggest that you break off into pairs for this full moon. Threes if you must." Bill said calmly.

"Do we have to pair off with people in here?" Rikki stood up. "Zane is used to the full moon drama, can't I just stay with him?"

"That's fine." Bill said with a grin. He liked the boyfriends, as Zane, Will, and Lewis had been affectionately nicknamed. They were the only people that knew what the group of kids really were. "In fact, you should all separate as much as possible from the others. Though I don't recommend spending the night alone. You should be fine in pairs. And there's more."

Bill walked to the desk and picked up one of the notebooks. "You all need to read this."

"Aw, come on." Angel complained. "I already have a term paper due in history class."

"I don't think you'll have too hard of a time with this." Bill spoke seriously. "I told you guys that things were going to change." Bill cleared his throat before speaking further. "In the next few days a group of scientists will arrive in town. They will say that they're here to research tidal pools, but they're really here to observe all of you."

Eyes widened. "Us?" Cleo's voice was higher than usual. "How do they know about us?"

"They don't, exactly." Bill clarified. "But they have their suspicions."

"What? Why?" Jason stood. He had been a merman for ten years, and he'd been painstakingly careful to make sure no one found out.

"That brings me to my last piece of news for today." Bill crossed his arms over his chest.

"There's more?" RJ raised her eyebrows. "Geez this is an action packed meeting, Bill. Usually we just chit chat."

"I know, but there's a lot to tell you guys today." Bill paced the room. "Heron." He said.

"The bird?" Rikki raised her shoulders.

"No." Bill shook his head. "The incredibly powerful sea demon. He has discovered Mako Island. More importantly, he wants to take Mako for his own. He knows that there is a group of mer folk living close by, but he doesn't know your identities. That's why he's hired this group of scientists. They're known as the Specialists and they know everything about merpeople, and they are very much under Heron's control.

"And what exactly does that mean for us?" Elyse stood next to Jason.

"It means that you all need to study these." Bill gestured to the binders. "These are personalized for each one of you." He began to distribute the booklets to the group. "You all need a refresher on how to be human."

"What?" Bella flipped through her notebook. "We are human, practically."

"Listen." Bill spoke seriously. "You all need to do as much as you can to throw the Specialists off the path. Read these. They will help."

"Post pictures from family trips to the ocean..." Cleo read aloud.

"Post pictures, do whatever you can to throw them off the scent." Bill walked over to stand next to Cleo's desk. "So, who will be pairing off with who for this full moon?"

Eyes flickered back and forth. There was a lot riding on this full moon, as they'd just found out.

"I'll be with Zane." Rikki spoke up.

"And I'll be with Lewis." Cleo said next.

"And me with Will." Bella finished.

"Well that was easy." Bill turned to look at the room. "And the rest of you? We'll decide partners before we decide locations."

"Um..." Jason tried to catch Natalie's eye. He finally managed to get her attention. "Ya know, I could partner with..."

"Nathaniel, right?" Natalie finished for him with a smile. "It makes sense, the two boys being paired together."

"Yeah... I guess." Jason sank back into his seat, deflated.

"RJ and I can look out for one another." Angel shrugged.

"Perfect." Bill grinned. "Nat, do you mind pairing up with Linda?"

"Not a bit." Natalie said with a smile. She liked the quiet girl. "Sound good?" She turned to look at her new partner.

"That's fine." Linda said quietly. Secretly, she was very relieved to be paired with Natalie. Nat was one of the only girls in the group who was consistently nice to her.

"Great." Bill checked his watch. "Alright. I highly advise you all to look over your manuals and to do as many non-mer related things as possible. Plan out where you will all be staying, and please be careful to stay away from the moon tomorrow. Call me if you need me."

Those were always the words he used to close his meetings. Call me if you need me. The group nodded, brains full with information that had been dropped on them so suddenly.

"So... people are on the lookout for \_us.\_" Elyse said thoughtfully as she walked out of the classroom next to Cleo, Rikki, and Bella.

"Yeah." Bella's voice was more than a little worried.

"Lay out by the pool." Emma read aloud. "Is Bill nuts? That's a terrible idea, we'll definitely get splashed."

"I guess that's the point." Cleo thought aloud. "We're supposed to do things that mermaids would never do."

"I'm still totally confused." Rikki shrugged. "We're being researched? Some dude named Heron is trying to take over Mako? This full moon is dangerous? What in the world?"

"I'm with you, Rikki." Bella exhaled. "Let's show all this stuff to the boys. Lewis will know how to handle it."

The five girls hurried out of the school and down towards the boat shed. They waved to Jason, who gave a distracted wave back. He was waiting for Nat to come out, trying his hardest to look natural. He only had to wait a few minutes before Natalie breezed through the school door. Jason hurried over to her, but stopped quickly as a male he didn't recognize followed her outside.

"So you can just let me know if you have \_any\_ questions." Natalie rambled to the boy behind her, who hurried to catch up. "I mean, any questions at all. This school can be confusing for new students." She finished with a giggle.

Jason's heart fell with a thump. He knew that giggle. That was the 'I have a total crush on this guy' giggle. He shoved his hands in his

pockets as he waited for Natalie to finish her conversation with the new guy.

"Mrs. Thomas really isn't so bad, she gives a load of open book tests. So don't stress!" Natalie was still talking as she stood outside the school. "And welcome to our school, Drew." She beamed up at him.

"Ah, thanks. Natalie, right?" Drew spoke from behind a mountain of papers.

"Yes." Nat said brightly. "I'll see you tomorrow, then?"

"Yeah, sure. I guess." Drew's eyes were locked onto a group of cheerleaders who had just walked off of the football field. "See you tomorrow." He said distractedly.

Nat's enthusiasm faded as she followed his gaze. She turned and walked back toward the school, a disappointed look on her face. She started when she noticed Jason. "I didn't know you were still here." She said as she walked past him and back into the school. "Study your notebook!" She called behind her with a smile.

Jason sighed before heading on his way. He had things to worry about that were far more important than whether or not Natalie West liked him or not. Even though he could hardly breath when he thought about her. But that didn't matter. Not at all.

He tried the whole way home to convince himself that he believed that.

The group immediately began putting themselves to work, training themselves to do regular human things. The full moon was coming, and with it came a lot more trouble than they were used to.

#### 4. The newcomers

"Sunscreen?"

"Check." The group responded.

Cleo was reading from a list. Rikki, Bella, Natalie, Linda, and Elyse were listening and answering dutifully to every question. They'd poured over the manual and were determined to act as human as possible for as long as it took. And, it appeared, one of the human things they needed was sunscreen. Not to be applied, of course, since it was almost entirely made up of water, but to be carried around and viewed.

"Fantastic." Cleo ticked the item off her list. "Flip flops." She read next.

"On our feet." Rikki reported.

This item had taken them by surprise when they'd read it, but they realized the list was right. All of the mers wore lace up shoes all the time, even in the hottest of temperatures. It was just too easy to step in the tiniest of puddles and have to bolt for the water when they wore sandals. Gradually they had all adopted tennis shoes as

their preferred footwear. Now each of them sported a pair of flip flops, leaving them perfectly vulnerable to the smallest splashes and puddles.

"Ok..." Cleo made another tick mark next to that item before continuing. "How about our drinks?"

The group looked uneasily at each other. The manual had suggested at least a couple members of the group carry drinks. Strawless drinks. With no lids.

"I don't know about that one, Cleo." Rikki said hesitantly. "It's just a little bit too dangerous, you know? I mean, one funny step and we splash ourselves and..." She let her voice trail off a bit.

"Rikki..." Cleo spoke slowly, as if she were talking to a child. "We'll carry empty cups, ok? And just pretend to drink out of them."

"Ohhhhh." Relief spread over Rikki's face. "In that case, toss me a cup!"

Cleo laughed as she tossed dark purple plastic cups to Rikki and Elyse. "Just remember to pretend to drink out of them and stuff. We want it to look real."

The group shared a brief moment of nervous laughter. They were getting ready to go to the beach together and they were more than a little bit terrified. Sure, they hung out on the beach often, but always right by the shore. That way if one of them got wet they could immediately disappear into the sea.

Today was different. Not only were they headed to the middle of the white sandy beach, where the sun was the brightest, but they were going with a group of school kids they did not usually spend time with. A group of normal, human teenagers. It was another suggestion from the manual. There was something electric in the air, and excitement of new test for them to pass.

"Ok then, I guess we're as ready as we're going to be." Cleo announced.

"What time does the moon rise?" Linda spoke up for the first time.

"Not until 7:33." Bella remembered. "As long as we're all in position before then we should be ok."

Linda nodded nervously. Normally she did not like drawing attention to herself. A beach party with school friends simply did not sound good to her in the slightest, but she would rather be social now than get exposed as a mermaid and lose her privacy for the rest of her life. In the long run the trade off seemed like a simple choice to her. Plus, she liked feeling included in the group.

The doorbell rang shrilly, making the girls jump.

"That'll be Jason." Rikki checked her watch. "He's early?" She said, furrowing her brow. "Like, half an hour early."

Cleo skipped to the door and pulled it open.

"Cleo!" Lewis burst through. "We are not going to let you girls go out there."

"It's too dangerous." Zane followed closely behind.

"Uh... yeah." Will tripped on his way through the door.

Cleo giggled as she shut the door behind them. "Hello, boys."

"Awesome entrance." Bella said sarcastically.

Linda shied to the back of the room as the boys burst in. She always got a little shy when the boyfriends came around. They were so cool, so suave, so cute... and she had zero people skills. Linda wished she could be as carefree and comfortable as Cleo, Rikki, Bella, Elyse, and Nat, but she was a definite work in progress.

"Seriously though." Lewis tried to look imposing. "I just don't think it's a good idea, you all going out there like that. I mean, you're going out there so people will think you're human. That doesn't do much good if you get a juice spilled on you, does it?"

"Lewis, we get juice spilled on us all the time." Rikki yawned.

"And we always make out just fine." Cleo patted his shoulders comfortingly.

"Yeah, but..." Lewis sputtered as he tried to find the right words. "Flip flops!" He pointed wildly.

"What I think our dear friend Lewis is trying to say," Zane gently grabbed the blonde by the shoulders and moved him aside. "Is that we just want to make sure this is really the right thing to do." He took Rikki's hands in his. "Can't we do our own thing? Just the..." He counted quickly. "9 of us? 10?"

"Tempting, but no." Rikki pulled her hands out of his and walked back to check her beach bag. Bill said people were watching us. Well, looking for us. We don't want to give them any reason to suspect us, and playing recluses who only hang around with one another is a definite warning sign."

"I mean, if I were some weirdo mermaid hunter, I would definitely go after the kids that never talk to anyone outside their group." Bella teased Will as she gave him a quick peck on the cheek.

"Ok, but we're sticking to you like glue." Lewis conceded reluctantly.

"I wouldn't have it any other way." Cleo giggled, ruffling Lewis's hair playfully.

"You guys are blowing this way out of proportion." Rikki rolled her eyes. "Are we ready?"

On cue, the doorbell rang once again. "He's still early, but we're

ready!" Bella said brightly as she pulled open the door. "Hello Jason."

"Hey Bella." Jason spoke to Bella but his eyes were locked onto Natalie. She was wearing a sky blue bikini top with jean cut off shorts. Jason swallowed hard. Gosh she was beautiful.

"Earth to Jason." Cleo spoke loudly in his ear.

He jerked his head back. "What?"

"We've been trying to talk to you." Cleo laughed. "What planet are you on today?"

Jason forced a laugh as the rest of the group teased him. "Ready to go?" He shook his keys excitedly.

The group piled into Jason's SUV and headed for the beach. A short drive later, they all jumped out into the bright sunlight.

"Let's party." Rikki said with a grin, dragging Zane along behind her.

The group distributed themselves throughout the crowd, trying not to look too much like they were keeping an eye on each other. Soon the music started and they began to let their guards down a little.

"Do you see Angel and RJ?" Natalie asked Jason as she craned her neck. The pair had wanted to go with a group of their own friends, but Natalie still wanted to know where they were.

"I think I just saw them walking towards the drink bar." Jason turned to check.

"I'd better run and say hi right quick, be right back! Oh, excuse me..." Natalie's voice dropped away as she realized who she had just bumped into.

"No problem." Drew smiled at her warmly. "Having fun?"

"Of course!" Natalie said brightly, giggling a bit. "This is, ah, great. You, um, like to dance?"

"I love it." Drew winked at her, causing her knees to weaken.

"Oh well great, I mean, this is an awesome song and if you aren't dancing with anyone-" Natalie stammered.

"Hey I'll catch you later, k?" Drew threw one more dazzling smile at Natalie, squeezing her arm briefly before he jogged over to a skinny blonde in a string bikini.

"K..." Natalie's shoulders slumped. Throwing Drew one last look of longing, she hurried back to her friends. Jason watched her go, his heart sinking to his feet.

A small group of four strangers approached the party. They stuck close together, observing the celebration. They were young, no older than eighteen or nineteen, and were of similar, thin, build. Each of them had the exact same shade of chestnut brown hair with eyes that



matched perfectly. Two girls, two boys, but eerily similar. They stood, watching, for several minutes until a beach ball landed on the sand in front of them.

"Help us out?" A teenager stepped out from the game of volleyball being played and held his arms up expectantly, waiting for one of them to toss the ball back.

"No problem!" One of the males smiled suddenly, bending down to pick up the inflatable ball. He reared back and threw it back to the teen. He stepped back to rejoin the group a moment later.

"Are you listening, Gemma?" He spoke quietly under his breath.

"I am." The youngest looking girl replied.

"And what do you hear?" The older male, who appeared to be the leader, asked softly.

"Give me a minute, Riece." Gemma held one hand up to silence him. "It's hard to read this many people. They all blend together."

"What about you, Capry?" Riece turned to the other female in the group.

"They're definitely here." Cap answered, a smile spreading across her face. "And from what I can feel there are a lot more of them than we realized."

"Good job." Riece patted her lightly on the arm before turning to the last member of their group. "Ash, what about you?"

The last boy found himself suddenly without words as he looked out at the all too familiar beach. He thought he had been ready for this day but suddenly he found himself at a loss for words. He closed his eyes for a second, breathing deeply as the memories returned. His eyes found faces in the crowd that he quickly recognized, faces that would easily recognize him if he stepped any closer. He looked a bit different, sure, but there were people here that would know him immediately. He swallowed hard, trying not to look like he cared much. He took a long deep breath. He didn't care. He was here with his new family. A quicker scan told him that Emma, the girl he had loved before everything had happened, was not amongst the partiers. Was she there? Did she still live in California?"

"Ash?" Riece took a step closer. "Can you feel anything?"

"Yes." Ash said firmly. "They're all masquerading as humans. But I can expose them easily." He held up one hand.

"That's why you're my favorite." Riece smiled darkly. "But don't do anything just yet. We don't want them revealed to the humans."

Ash nodded, letting his hand fall down to his side. "We'll find them. All of them."

"I'll report in." Riece spoke. "Heron will be glad to know we're in the right place."

All four of the newcomers smiled, nodding as they observed the

party.

## 5. The Past

The party was still going strong when the group had excused themselves. Lewis had given Cleo a meaningful look, gesturing to his watch. It was 6:30, plenty of time for everyone to separate into pairs and hide themselves away to ride out the full moon.

Linda was making a last minute stop in the grocery store before heading on to Nat's house. The girls had a craving for ice cream and Linda was all too happy to pick it up for them. She'd been around crowds of people all afternoon and she was more than ready for a little time by herself, away from everyone else.

"Excuse me." An unfamiliar voice came from behind her.

Linda turned to see who had spoken to her. It was a girl with long, brown hair and eyes that matched. She was maybe two or three years younger than Linda, but she had a wisdom in her eyes that made her seem much older. "Yes?" Linda prompted gently when the girl didn't speak immediately.

"I'm sorry, I'm new in town. Is there anything worth doing this evening? My name is Gemma by the way." She smiled, but her eyes remained cool. "You know, a concert or something?"

"Oh, I don't know." Linda answered quietly, keeping her eyes from meeting Gemma's. There was just something about this new girl that seemed... off. "You'd be better off asking Cathy." Linda nodded towards a girl she recognized from school who was standing in line a few lanes over.

"Thanks." Gemma said quickly. "I'll do that." She spun smartly on her heel and headed off toward the back of the store, not stopping to ask Cathy about the evening's plans.

Linda watched her go, not quite sure what to think of the brief interchange. There was definitely something strange about this Gemma girl. Still, Linda shook herself, there was something strange about herself too, and she knew that she would never do any harm. Who was she to judge this new girl? Casting one last look over her shoulder at the stranger, Linda pushed the exit door open and disappeared through it.

Gemma walked quickly to the back of the small store, keeping an eye out on everyone she passed.

"Well?" Riece stepped out from behind a shelf.

"She's definitely hiding something," Gemma furrowed her brow. "But I couldn't read exactly what it was."

"What went through her head when you asked about the goings on tonight?" Riece pushed. "It's a full moon, surely she thought something worth reporting."

Gemma shook her head thoughtfully. "She's a weird one. She briefly thought about the sleepover she's having tonight with some girl named

Natalie, and then she just thought about how anxious she was to talk to a stranger. Nothing good."

"Hmmm." Riece thought for a moment. The four of them had had a very productive afternoon. It hadn't been hard to eliminate more than half of the teenagers in this small town. Their orders were simple. Find the water creatures, report their identities to Heron. "Good work, Gemma." You stay here, keep an ear out. If you hear anyone thinking about the full moon report to me immediately."

"Of course." Gemma smiled and headed back to the front of the store to peruse magazines while she waited.

Ash sat at his post, where he had been for the last two hours. His power wasn't of much use to the group yet, so he had been instructed to keep an eye out for anything odd or unusual. As Ash looked over the familiar beach, a beach he had spent so much time walking on with Emma, he couldn't help but think back to two years ago, when his life had been so completely different. And then, despite himself, he found himself thinking about Emma, a girl he had tried so hard to forget about during the last two years.

It had taken a long time for Ash to finally discover the secret Emma had been hiding from him. She was a mermaid. A real life, honest to goodness, mermaid. Ash remembered the day she had shown him what she was like it was yesterday. She'd just gotten up her nerve and marched right out into the surf. Ash had watched, wide eyed as the blonde girl had changed from human to mermaid right before his eyes. And he had loved her all the more for it.

Ash had always felt privileged that Emma had trusted him enough to open herself up to him. After all, he was the only person the girls had ever shown themselves to on purpose. Both Zane and Lewis had discovered the secret by accident, but Emma had revealed hers to Ash. It gave him a sense of pride to feel that close to her, that trustworthy.

The couple had shared three wonderful months together, months that felt like only a few passing days. Then, one day, something had begun to change between them. Ash had begun to feel distant from Emma, as if he were losing her. Emma had sworn that she loved him and that he would never lose her, but still he felt the two of them growing apart. He had begun to feel repulsed by her fin. Swimming with her in the water didn't hold nearly the amount of joy it used to. He became paranoid that she had mermaid powers he was unaware of, powers she was using to control him.

Emma had pleaded with him to stop saying such things. She loved him and she always would. Ash had tried to believe her, but his mind kept becoming clouded over.

It was soon after that that Emma had gotten the news that her parents would be taking her and her brother Elliot on an extended trip around the world for her father's work. Emma had broken the news to Ash carefully, tears in her eyes. Ash had hugged her close and told her he would miss her and think of her always, but deep down he felt relieved. There was no way Emma could use her powers on him if she was on the other side of the world.

About two weeks after Emma had gone, Ash had begun to feel sick.

Really sick. He was dizzy, pale, and couldn't stop sweating. He had had to quit his job at the cafe, it made him too nauseous to be around so much food. Eventually he had been forced to check himself into the hospital. He was admitted immediately with a temperature of 106. The nurses had hooked him up to tons of machines and gave him enough sedative to keep him asleep for the whole night. That's where Riece had found him. Ash let him memory take him back to that night.

The hospital monitor blinked steadily, beeping in a quiet rhythm that Ash found relaxing. His skin felt like it was burning underneath, tingling so that he couldn't seem to sleep comfortably even with the drugs the nurse had administered. He had a prickly feeling rippling down his back that he was being watched, though he hadn't heard anyone enter the room. His eyes blinked open slowly, looking to see who was standing so quietly beside his bed.

"Hello, Ash." A tall young man with wavy brown hair looked down at him quietly. "I was wondering when you would start the change."

"Wha-" Ash tried to sit up, but his head was spinning too badly for him to manage it. He closed his eyes, trying to concentrate on pushing himself upright. By the time he opened them the stranger had vanished. Ash decided it must have all been a dream brought on by the fever and soon fell fast asleep.

Ash was released from the hospital two days later, after his fever had broken. His symptoms seemed to have diminished, but he felt inexplicably strange. His stomach felt funny, like he was constantly being flipped upside down. In fact, his entire body felt different. His skin felt almost electric, and his eyes were sharper than they'd ever been in his life. Ash locked himself in the bathroom in his apartment and splashed some cool water on his face. The instant the water touched his skin became nauseated and let himself fall onto the cool tile of the bathroom floor. He breathed deeply, wondering what could be happening to him. The water should have felt clear and refreshing, but it had felt like light fire.

Ash pulled himself to stand and took a long look at himself in the mirror for the first time in days. He was bewildered at the image that stared back at him. Ash leaned in closer, carefully examining his face.

His eyes had changed color. They had always been a deep brown, nearly black. Deep, but warm. The eyes that looked back at him were not his own. They were a light brown, almost a burnt golden color. They seemed to shimmer under the glaring bathroom light.

His skin was a pale white, paler than it had ever been, even in the dead of winter. But it was summer now, and Ash had been outside nearly every day in the harsh sun. He had built up a dark tan that accentuated his muscles nicely. Now, overnight it seemed, he had changed. He didn't look pasty, just pale. His skin looked like porcelain, smooth and slightly glimmering.

Ash took a step back, shocked at the changes he saw. How had this happened? What was happening to him?

A knock at the door startled him out of his thoughts and brought him

back into the room. He was afraid to open it. What if it was someone he knew? How would he explain the changes he was experiencing? Ash peeked carefully through the tiny side window. Not recognizing the three people waiting on the other side, he carefully opened the door a crack.

"Hello, Ash." The tallest spoke before Ash could open his mouth. There was something familiar about the teen, but Ash couldn't quite put his finger on it.

"We've come to help you." The taller of the two girls smiled up at him. "I'm Cap. May we come in?"

Wordlessly, Ash held open the door and allowed the three strangers inside. He couldn't take his eyes off of them. Their skin was the exact same shade as his, white and perfect. And their eyes shimmered golden, matching their perfectly brown hair. They looked like he did, and he was immediately drawn to them.

"We've been watching you for weeks, Ash." The tallest spoke again, taking a seat on the couch. The two girls assembled themselves on either side of him. "I'm sure you've noticed some, well, changes in your appearance lately."

"Not just in my appearance." Ash said quietly.

"I'm Riecen." The stranger said with a smile. "Riece for short. You've already met Capry. And this is Gemma." He gestured to the youngest looking girl.

"Who are you?" Ash managed. "I mean, why are you here?"

Riece stood, pacing a bit before opening his mouth to speak. "Do you know that you are adopted?"

Ash nodded. "Of course." He'd known that his whole life. He'd never quite gotten along with his adopted parents, which was most of the reason he'd moved out on his own so early.

"Have you ever been interested in finding your real parents?" Riece raised his eyebrows as he spoke.

"Not really." Ash answered honestly. There didn't seem to be any point. They didn't want him, so why should he seek them out?

"I'm going to tell you a story, Ash." Riece stood in front of him, laying one hand on his shoulder. "Down, deep under the sea, live many creatures." He eyed Ash carefully. "Including mermaids."

Ash's eyes flickered. He didn't know how well he could trust these newcomers.

"I know you know this already, Ash." Riece said plainly. "You never would have manifested if you hadn't had close contact with a mermaid."

Ash had no answer for that, so he just nodded vaguely and gestured for Riece to continue.

"Did you know that there are other magical creatures of the sea? Not

just mermaids?" Riece asked.

"No." Ash said honestly.

"They all used to live together peacefully." Riece spoke quietly. "Until one day they didn't anymore. There was dissension between the mers, different species began to take sides against others. Small skirmishes broke out throughout the sea until, one day, war began. The merpeople won, along with their allies. The defeated people were banished from the sea to live on the land."

"Ok." Ash nodded. "And what does that have to do with me?"

A small smile crossed Riece's face before he continued talking. "You are not a human, Ash. You are a Merrick."

Ash stared at Riece in silence for several seconds before breaking out into slightly wild laughter. "Are you serious?" Ash couldn't stop laughing. "You know, you all had me going for a while, there. Thanks for the laugh."

"I'm telling you the truth." Riece said solemnly. "The Merricks were banished from the sea entirely. Your parents were some of those banished from the sea to live as humans. While they were cursed to remain human, their offspring still retained traits from life under the sea. Those traits become especially prevalent after the child spends time with another magical sea creature."

"Yeah, yeah." Ash grinned. "Really, good one you guys."

"Deep down you know we're right." Gemma spoke up for the first time. "I can hear you."

Riece walked to stand beside the petite brunette. "We all have different powers, though some of us are more gifted in certain aspects of them than others. Gemma is particularly talented at mind reading."

"Mind reading?" Ash said skeptically.

"Yes" Riece answered matter of factly. "Our people cannot talk under the water, therefor all full blooded mer creatures communicate through the mind. Gemma has inherited that skill perfectly." He looked at the girl affectionately.

"You're thinking that you do believe us, but you're afraid it's some kind of trick to expose... Emma." Gemma stood. "It's ok, I felt the same way when Riece showed up at my door. Well, not about this Emma, but about being confused."

"The mermen and mermaids banished our families from the sea." Riece's tone became serious. "They took us out of our homes and forced us onto the land against our will. That's where you come from, Ash. You are a true Merrick."

Ash was still staring at Gemma, terrified to listen to more. Still skeptical, he raised one eyebrow and asked "What now then? Why are you here?"

"We used to be normal humans too." Cap spoke up. "Then, intentionally

or not, we came in contact with a mermaid, or merman, which triggered our true forms. I don't even know who mine was." She added with a laugh. "I guess someone I went to school with must have been hiding a fishy secret."

The three of them laughed at the joke, but Ash just stared at them, trying to comprehend what they were saying.

"When you started the change we could feel it." Gemma said comfortingly. "We didn't know exactly where you were, but we could sense you. It was just a matter of time before we found you."

"There aren't very many of us." Cap continued. "Most of the banished water people have died, or couldn't adapt to life on land. Even fewer ever had kids. So whenever we feel a new one being to manifest we really get excited."

"I'm sorry." Ash paced the floor roughly. "But this is all too weird. How am I supposed to believe any of this? I mean, you're telling me that this... Gemma... reads minds? What do the rest of you do?"

Cap stood up from the couch. "I'm super in tuned with other magical creatures." She said proudly. "I can locate any sea creature really quickly, if they're close by. I mean, like merpeople and others like us. I can sense 's how we found you." She grinned.

"Yeah, ok." Ash kept pacing. "And what about you?" He looked to Riece. "What do you do?"

"Let's save that for later." Riece smirked as he walked to stand in front of Ash. "The question is what do you do?"

"He means what can you do?" Gemma perked up. "What's your power?"

Ash stared blankly at their three expectant faces. "What power?"

"We all have a specific power, something we're really good at." Cap said cheerfully. "What's yours?"

Ash shrugged. "I don't have one."

"Of course you do!" Gemma said eagerly. "We all have a specific power we're super good at. Amongst other powers, of course."

"So you have to have one." Cap added.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you." Ash held his hands in the air. "But you must have come to the wrong house. I don't have power. I'm just a normal human being."

"Ash." Riece held Ash's shoulders and walked him to stand in front of the full length mirror in Ash's hallway. "Look at yourself."

Gemma and Cap walked to stand on either side of Ash as the four of them looked into the mirror. Ash gasped, taking it all in. Riece was right. The four of them practically looked identical. Their skin was an identical shade of delicate white. Their hair could have been dyed by the same hairdresser. It fell in beautiful waves, the boys' shorter than the girls'. But their eyes were the most striking,

identical in color and shape. Once Ash had looked at the four of them standing there together, he couldn't deny that they were connected. He also felt it deep down in his gut. They were meant to find each other.

They all stayed with Ash for the next few weeks. Riece explained everything to him in time, eager for an addition to their small group.

"The mermen banished our people from the sea." He explained solemnly. "They weren't allowed to come back to their own homes, their friends. It was cruel."

Ash nodded, waiting for his friend to continue.

"Since then, some merpeople have been permitted to live both on land and in the sea." Riece continued bitterly. "While we are banished to the land. We can't even touch the water without feeling sick."

Ash swallowed hard, thinking of Emma and her friends. Gemma wasn't around to hear his thoughts, he tried to keep his face neutral.

"Why should they be able to live on both land and sea?" Riece continued bitterly. "Our families, everyone we love, were forced to adapt to life on the land. And they're allowed to have both?"

Ash nodded. He could see Riece's point. It didn't seem fair that the merpeople were allowed to have both while he was only allowed to live on the land.

"So that's what we do." Riece had a satisfied look on his face. "We find the mermaids and mermen that are selfish enough to live on the land and in the sea. And we fix it."

"Fix it?" Ash raised his eyebrows.

"That's my power." Riece smiled slyly. He leaned in close and spoke quietly, suspensefully. "I have the power to banish the merpeople to the sea. Permanently."

Ash waited a few seconds, unsure of what Riece meant. When he didn't explain further, Ash prompted him. "So... What exactly do you do?"

"Picture this." Riece held his hands out, like a tv screen. "Little miss mermaid thinks she can have everything. She can be a human, she can be a mermaid, she has total access to all of the best parts of life." Riece's lip curled as he spoke. "While we, natural born sea creatures, are banished from our native homes, forced to live on dry land." Riece let the tension build for just a seconds. "Little mermaid is swimming, happy as a clam, when she comes upon me."

"And then?" Ash found himself drawn into the story.

"A little magic, worked by me of course, and that little mermaid never steps a foot out of the water again. Actually," Riece laughed. "She never steps a foot anywhere again."

"So you can make them stay merpeople forever." Ash figured out.



"And ever and ever." Riece finished. "Why should they be able to do whatever they want? They wanted the water, they should stay in it. They banished us to land, why shouldn't we have it for ourselves?"

Ash couldn't argue, Riece made a valid point. "So... that's what you do? Hunt merpeople who live on land?"

"In a nutshell, sure." Riece said casually. "We actually make a living of it. Some guy named Heron pays us well for each merperson we banish to the sea."

Ash's head was swimming with information. "What does this mean for me?" He asked.

"Well, naturally we want you to come with us." Riece answered simply. "Once we find your specific power you can help us find more rogue merpeople." Riece gritted his teeth. "And then we can send them all to the water forever."

Ash flashed back to the present, sitting there on the beach, watching people he used to know. His past in this town now seemed like a dream he had had. Rikki, Cleo, Lewis, Zane,... and Emma. He had seen all of them today, save the one girl he was looking for. Ash didn't know what he'd say to Emma if he did see her again, but he looked for her anyway.

They had found out Ash's power on the first hunt they went on together. They were looking for two mermaids who they knew were living in an Australian town near the coast on the other end of the country. Ash had been with his new friends for six months or so and he had grown to love them. He felt closer to Gemma, Cap, and Riece than he had felt with anyone in his life.

Gemma had located the two mermaids using her mind reading power and Cap had confirmed what they were with her unnatural ability to sense merpeople. The four of them had cornered them, ready for Riece to work his magic.

All of a sudden, Ash had held out one hand, guided by something he couldn't explain. He'd made a tight fist, twisting his hand suddenly.

Before anyone could move, the two girls in front of them had transformed into mermaids. Right there on the ground, with no water to change them.

Instantly, Gemma and Cap had turned to face him, smiles spread across both of their faces.

"You found your power!" Cap squealed eagerly.

"You can make them change into their true forms against their will!" Gemma laughed as she hugged Ash tightly.

Ash had felt a sense of pride as he realized what he could do. The next time they cornered a mermaid out of the water he had done the exact same thing, forcing the girl to transform. A second later Riece had worked his own magic and the silly girl had been banished to the ocean forever.

Since then, Ash had become closer than family with the three other Merricks. They did everything together. Riece was the leader, with Ash in second command. Cap and Gemma followed behind them loyally, following every direction they were given. The four were inseparable. They looked out for each other, kept each other company, and became like a family. Ash had never felt so at home.

Now, looking at the familiar beach, Ash felt a strange tugging at his heart. Memories of a lighter time when he hadn't had to worry about anything supernatural. He could feel the presence as someone walked up behind him.

"Well? Anything new to report?" Reice's voice startled him.

Ash turned to face his friend, the person who had made him feel at home the last several months. "They're definitely here." He replied. He didn't have Cap's sensitivity for feeling merpeople, but he could still feel when they were near. "Don't worry." Ash said confidently. "We'll find them." His face tightened as the familiar bitterness set in. "Every. Last. One."

End  
file.